

*Elisba's Pottage at Gilgal, spoiled by
Symbolical Cookery at Oxford.*

BEING A
FEW REMARKS
(BY A REVIEWER)
ON A
SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE
The Warden and College of All-Souls
IN THE
UNIVERSITY of OXFORD.



On FRIDAY the Second of NOVEMBER, 1759.

BEING THE
Anniversary of the Founder's Commemoration.

— — Fuit hæc Sapientia quondam
Secernere Sacra Profanis.

L O N D O N,

Printed for the SONS OF THE PROPHETS:

Sold by R. Baldwin, in Pater-noster Row, and by the Booksellers of Oxford.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Preacher of the Sermon now animadverted on, it is said had no Hand in the Publication, nor possibly in its Composition. It is said to be sent to the Press, entirely without his Knowledge; but I hope he can tell to whom he gave it, under no Restrictions of having it ^a returned, and then the Publisher might easily be discovered. But if it should happen to be the Composition of one, preached by another, and published (according to the Authors Desire) by a third, this seems to unravel the studied Mystery of the Advertisement to the Sermon, and shews the noble Triumvirate to have agreed and contrived the Publication.

But I think this is not a sufficient Reason for its being anonymous. It is with me a more cogent one, that the Preacher was not the Composer.

An illegitimate Brat is seldom the Object of any ardent Affection in a Person, who is conscious of having no Hand in the getting it; and 'tis too often seen that the poor Thing is turned adrift on the wide World, and forced to bear an irreputable Name, for the wanton Indulgence of a loose and debauched Father.

^a If he gave it to the Author, there was no Occasion for its Return.

This perhaps may be a Reason, why neither the Preacher, nor the Composer thought proper to own the Production. The one was conscious that it was not his own, and the other might have a little parental Affection for its comical Features, but did not care to father it, because its limbs were somewhat distorted.

The Argument for publishing it at all, is not so conclusive as I could wish it; Chearfulness and good Humour are pleasing Companions over a Bottle, but I do not remember they were made the Criterion of a good Sermon, nor that any Divine (the present instance excepted) ever made them Apologies for the Publication of one.

I wish Page the 18th did not exhibit a Contradiction to good Humour; and perhaps sarcastical Reflections may be what the Author intended by Chearfulness. By what Means this curious Piece was conveyed to the Public, is not any great Matter of Concern; but that it was ever published at all, I find, has occasioned Concern in many serious and honest Minds.

LONDON, Jan. 25, 1760.

REMARKS

ON A

SERMON, &c.

HAVING lately perused a Sermon preached in All Souls College Chapel on the Founder's Day, 1759, on *Elisha's Visit to Gilgal*; and another on the same Text preached at Tunbridge, 1694; the different Treatment of that Subject excited in me some few Remarks, which I hope will give no Offence, nor raise any Choler, that my Sentiments don't tally exactly with all Divines.

The literal and historical Account of *Elisha's* going to *Gilgal*, was no more than this; — There was a Dearth at that Time in the Land. The Prophet therefore hastened thither to relieve the Sons of the Prophets; And he no sooner came thither, but he gave the following hospitable Orders for an Entertainment. — *Set on the great Pot, and seethe Pottage for the Sons of the Prophets.*

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The honest old *Tunbridge* Divine fairly deduces from *Elisha's* Orders, the Necessity of a very commendable Quality in Life; Hospitality *in* and *to* the Clergy: And he makes this useful Theorem, (viz.) "That a kind and liberal Reception, neither niggardly fordid, nor extravagantly profuse, first became the Sons of the Prophets." Or else says he, "take the Meaning in these Words, (viz.) that all Clergymen, especially the *Elishas* of them, whom Nature and Heaven have so liberally bestowed their Favours upon, and loaded with Riches and Greatness ought to be hospitable and charitable."——And this is an easy and natural Deduction from the Text.

The *Oxford* Divine makes an Observation not unlike this, when he says, "It would not perhaps be easy for us to frame to ourselves a more amiable Idea of (what I think may not improperly be called the *Visitatorial Office*." The Observation I think very just; and I can with great Ease frame to myself an Idea of the Exercise of this amiable Practice in many of our present Bishops, in their Visitations of the Clergy; and in their keeping an open Day in each Week for any Visitors.

We find them, from a just Estimate of the small Pittance of poor Vicars, and many other of the inferior Clergy, closely copying *Elisha's* Bounty;

ty; and easing them of all Expence in their primary and triennial Visitations. But I wish our Divine had stopped here, without making a Paraphrase which the Sacred History does not countenance. He adds, that "the Visitatorial Power" or Office, was now lodged in the Hands of "one, who watched over the Societies committed" to his Care, *for Good and not for Evil.*

If I may judge as a Christian ought to do, I mean charitably, I hope this Power is always lodged in such Hands, and, I hope, ever will be. I cannot however but conclude, that this Comment is either obliquely reflecting, or nothing at all to his Purpose. *Elisha*, he tells us, interfered sometimes (as in the present Case) *uncalled for*, and *unappealed to*.

This, I am positive, is no where suggested in the Sacred History; and by the *Italick Character*, in which the two Words are printed, there is some *Wit*, I imagine concealed, or some Sarcasm intended, or else he must be very injudicious in the Manner of Printing, to make a Distinction without a Difference, and an Alteration to convey no particular Idea.

Thus far however both the Divines agree in the general Doctrine of the Text, viz. *Hospitality*. But Danger generally awaits Novelty, and the Excursions of a romantick Imagination are not always pleasing or profitable. The whole Passage

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sage has a plain and obvious Meaning in it's literal Interpretation ; but this does not give Content. He can easily persuade himself, that some more abstruse and figurative Sense may be intended by it ; but I do not find that he can persuade any one besides to think so.

Something however must be done to make the Discourse a little pertinent to the Occasion ; and therefore he is confident, that an easy Application to the Purposes of their then Meeting, might be drawn from it : And yet a Consciousness of a forced and unnatural Explication, keeps him awhile in Suspense ; he Endeavours to get the graver Part of the Audience to connive at his novel Devices ; he knew it must appear to them, as it does to the Publick now, an Excursion of a wild Fancy, and a loose Imagination. But if he could pacify these, he thought it would easily be quitted by the younger Sort. And truly, if childish Things can be deemed Amusements, and Laughter denote Approbation, verily the Preacher, as well as the latent Composer, I think have both had their Rewards.

It is really strange that the Author could not believe, that this transitory Visit of *Elisba* to his Pupils, and healing the Pottage, was all that was meant by it. The saving fifty or threescore Boys from starving, was not an Action of any trifling Concern ; and, I think, as it was evidently the
Effect

Effect of supernatural Power, it might have been acquiesced in, as a noble Deed, by a Christian Divine. And if it be considered, that, had *Elisba* ~~not~~ made this seasonable Visit, their own Endeavours, through their Ignorance in *Potherbs*, and little Knowledge in *Simpling*, would have been certainly instrumental in their own Destruction, and their Broth, instead of working off their Hunger, had proved the Vehicle of certain Death.

But the Author (like the Mole, whose Happiness is Obscurity) turns up the Mould *Naso satis acuto*, and shews his Dexterity in finding Treasure, where no other would have dug for it: And his Reason for thus extracting Light out of Darkness, is the *Chearfulness* and *Festivity* of All Souls Day. And this is to apologize for the wandering of his Imagination! There is no Dispute, he tells us, about this important Text of Scripture at present, therefore the Festivity of this occasional Meeting, is to justify his abstruse, symbolical, and unallegorical Sense of it, that some Dispute may be raised about it hereafter. — O RARE BEN!

The *Soup*, I find, could not content him; something more of the *Solids* must be introduced to pacify his Hankering; and an extravagant Dish of *Forced Meat*, served up on the Removal of the Pottage. For my own Part I never should have divined, that a Pot could be an Emblem of

308 a College; and had a Reason been demanded, at the old Game of *Crambo*, why it was so? I believe the greatest Sophist would have confessed his Ignorance, and in the Symbolizer's own Words, would have exhibited in ^b *Dumb Shew*.

But there may possibly be a Solution to this knotty Question, tho' not as yet exhibited in the Sermon, and perhaps the next Time he flies his Imagination, it may be discovered.

I remember when a Proposal of this kind was made at an *Ordinance*, and the Question to be answered was this; viz. *Why is the City of Oxford like a Fleet of Ships?* After much plodding by some of the Company, and no lucky Hit made, Dr. D—l—ne, the then ingenious President of St. John's College, offered some Reasons, (without robbing *Ezekiel's* Pot of one Ingredient) and said, He thought there could not be a greater Similitude; for he looked upon the Fathers of the City to be *Naves*, the Sons to be *Puppæ*, and the Daughters to be *Nautæ*. I would not have made the Digression, but to shew the Possibility of making a Similitude, where, to all human Appearance there was none at all: And this perhaps may be the Author's Case, though he does not chuse to exhibit it in his Sermon.

^b A pretty Expression of the Author's, alluding, I suppose, to a Harlequin Farce at the End of a Play.

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But to return. Rambling from eating to building seems to me to indicate an Imagination that has run away from Reason, and an unnatural Desertion of the Text. The swimming of the Iron Heads of Axes, had been better applied to *Elisha's* Recommendation of building Colleges. In this he actually indulged the School-boys of *Gilgal*; and not only gave them Leave to fell Timber for their new Building at Jordan, but miraculously caused the Iron to swim, that they might not be like the ' lazy Carpenter, who threw away his Tools, because he would not work.

This would have been a pertinent Subject for the Author's Talent, on so remarkable a Festival; and I think might have been more approved of, even in a symbolical Explanation.

But not to wander from the Point in View. " Of what Use (says the Author) can the Pot in " the Text be properly a Sign unto us? It has served the substantial Purpose of Hospitality, and " festal Entertainment to the Students in the prophetic Science," — Is it therefore incapable of serving them again? Must it be thrown away, because it has been used once?

The good old Dame (after she has used her Bell-metal Pot for more than threescore Years,) makes a particular Bequest of it in her last Will

• Vide *Gassendus*.

and

and Testament, to her dear Grandson *Benjamin*; not doubting (if the Lad loved Pottage) but it would serve him as many more. And, I am confident, a provident Bursar of All-Souls would think it very extravagant, and the Visitor not much approve of the *culinary* Expences, should a new Pot be bought for every Mess of Soup to be made for that Society.

But since it is asked of what *Elisha's* Pot at *Gilgal*, is a Sign to the Students at *Oxford*? I am willing to believe that it ought to convince this interrogating Divine, that the Power of God was mighty in the Prophet to work Miracles. That it was a Sign which ought to convince *David's* Fool of the Stupidity of his Infidelity, (if Conviction can prevail, where there is so little Sense) and it serves to point out to every Fellow in All-Souls College, that there is a Providence, which super-intends the well-disposed, and directed the Heart of *Henry Chicheley* to feed about as many *poor Scholars* at *Oxford*, as *Elisha* did formerly at *Gilgal*. And I will aver it, that a grateful Acknowledgment of so munificent a Founder, is a better Subject for All-Souls Day, than a symbolical Explanation of a Pot into a College.

But now peeps the Mouse out of the pregnant Mountain, and the teeming Mind is delivered of the wonderful Conception. Because the Pot had
produced

produced one Belly-full of Broth for the Sons of the Prophets, *therefore* it must serve to shadow forth to us the Expediency and Usefulness of founding Societies of Religion and Learning. Had *Aristotle* been alive he would have slapt in——
Negatur Consequentia.

But the Author, to do him Justice, was aware of this, and to keep in his String, seems guarded against it. By the Help of *Alexander Cruden's* Concordance he had found that *Ezekiel* had a Pot as well as *Elisha*, and it happened to be compared to *Jerusalem*. But it was a very injudicious Choice, to pitch upon the very worst Pot in all Scripture to corroborate his symbolical Explanation.

The boiling Pot in *Ezekiel*, shews the Calamities and Miseries, wherewith the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem* should be afflicted and consumed. *Elisha's* Pot produced some nourishing Broth to save the young Students from perishing; but the Similitude of the other shews how they shall be destroyed.

I really wish I had had any Manner of Acquaintance with the Symbolizer, before he had published. Instead of *Ezekiel's* unscummed Pot, I would sincerely have advised him to have borrowed *Solomon's* refining Pot. The Resemblance had certainly been more *a propos*. And as the Members of a College are supposed to come thither

ther to be refined by a learned Education, this Pot would have been the Thing, and helped him at a dead Lift.

Let us however indulge the Author in blending *Ezekiel's* Pot, with *Elisba's*, in order to give some Countenance to his Explanation; Let us allow him to put into *Elisba's*, what was ordered for *Ezekiel's* only, I apprehend it will not be one Whit the more like a College.

A great Loose must be given to the Imagination, before any Similitude will appear. Suppose we make *Ezekiel's* Resemblance to be (instead of *Jerusalem*) spoken of the City of *Oxford*; we must first imagine the *Mayor* to be the Thigh, that choice Piece; the *Recorder* the Shoulder, that *Tit Bit*; and the *Assistants* and *Bailiffs* the Marrow Bones, those useful Ingredients to give a Richness to the Broth: And when all this is done, without obliterating the consequent Curse upon the bloody City, we could make no Manner of Use of it in Behalf of our Expositor.

By concluding from hence the Necessity of building more Cities for Inhabitants who thus deserved God's Vengeance, would bespeak a Man much fitter for a narrow Cell in *Moor-fields*, than range him in the Catalogue of any Expositors — but those of the *symbolical* Order.

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I can easily persuade myself, that I should make a much better Application of my Learning, according to the Method of such *Ænigmatists* in Divinity, if I should happen not to acquiesce in the literal Meaning of *Elisha's* Cure of *Naaman*, the *Assyrian*. I might tread in our Author's Steps, and ask of what Use it was to us, that the Leper was cleansed of his nasty Disorder? Cannot I easily persuade myself that some more abstruse and figurative Sense may be intended by it? Something more than barely to inform us of healing a Heathen General of the Itch?

Well: What is next to be done? Why send out Fancy to ransack the Globe; order my Imagination to stir its Stumps, pump up my Wit, and see what can be done. — There is great Applause in writing ingeniously upon nothing, and *Erasmus* got Honour by his Encomium on Folly.

But stop! First let me advertise, that I am not settling any important or disputed Point of Religion, and then my Excursion is well apologized for, if I go out of the Track of a Set of dull, jejune and dry Commentators. *Festivity* will account for my Sprightliness and Fancy, and an orthodox, insipid Exposition might spoil the Mirth of the Day.

Having thus swept the Impediments away, I come to the Point and say: Surely this *Naaman* must

must be emblematical of the Church; that *Elisha* gave him a *Recipe* for the Leprosy of Idolatry which had strangely defiled him from Top to Toe, as it does the Church of *Rome* to this Day: That *Gebazi*, undoubtedly typified old *Tindall* of All-Souls, who under the Pretence of a Christian robbed *Chicheley* of his Liveries, as *Gebazi* did *Naaman* of two Changes of Raiment, and under the specious Title of setting forth the Rights of the Christian Church, endeavoured to rob it of its Emoluments, just as *Gebazi* did *Naaman* in the Name of his Master; and under the Pretence of relieving two of the Sons of the Prophets.

But an *Elisha* of our own Clergy detected the Infidel, as the Prophet did his lying Servant. — And this I think is as good a Comment as the symbolical Explanation of the Potage Pot.

Be it remembered however (notwithstanding this Instance of trying my Skill at symbolizing) that I don't recommend, nor hugely approve of this Shuffling and cutting with historical Facts in Scripture. I look upon every Degree of ridiculing Religion, as a Demonstration of a bad Judgment, and he, who cannot be *witty* without being *wicked*, is one who courts Applause, which a Man of solid Sense would despise.

If I should for once oblige the Author, and allow his Pot to be like All-Souls College, and
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give him the Liberty of stewing all *Ezekiel's* choice Pieces in it, (viz.) the Warden, the Fellows, the Chaplains and Clerks, what would be the Consequence of this? If the Analogy be at all preserved, they must be stewed to make Soup for themselves. For *Elisba's* Pottage was for the Sons of the Prophets only, notwithstanding the Author would have it, that they are to be poured out for the Use of the *People*.

The Word *People* manifestly signifies the Sons of the Prophets, and not the People of *Gilgal* or any other Place, as is clear from the History, and from the Intention of *Elisba's* Visit. If this then be the Meaning, and with no Propriety can any other be suggested, then, I am satisfied, there would be Death in the Pot, and, without a Visit from *Elisba*, miraculously to heal the Ingredients, the baneful Qualities would never be vanquished or dissipated.

Thus, by this unnatural Rant, Destruction, instead of Relief, would be introduced; the Members would be stewed into Pottage for themselves, and unless they are in themselves infinitely purer than the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, (whom *Ezekiel's* Pot was provided for) nothing but Scum and Filthiness would be

the Produce, and few People, (out of the Pot) would envy their Luxury. — What strange Pains are here taken; what Brains beating, and putting Invention to the Rack to make a new Dish for All-Souls Gaudy, when there was no Manner of Occasion to add one Mess to so elegant and delicious an Entertainment?

'Tis Pity the Cultivation of the human Mind should tend to no better Purpose than to carry the *Divine* into such forced and unnatural Comments. An utter Neglect, and even a Contempt of all human Accomplishments, (if attended with a due Discharge of Duty, and Christian Faith) is certainly a better Qualification for the Reception of Divine Grace, than thus perverting Literature to the Ridicule of Scripture: And a modern Enthusiast (as he may be wittily termed) upon good Principles and Practice, is in my Account a much better Man, than a lettered Droll, or a Buffoon Expofitor.

Woolston, by a *Nostrum* which he had from a dirty Jew, strove all he could to corrupt the Doctrine of *Christ*, and to allegorize away the Reality of all our Saviour's Miracles. Christianity received a Blow from the impious Drollery of that Unbeliever; scoffing at Things sacred pleased the Illiterate; his familiar Abuse
of

of the Miracles became a Catechism in Infidelity, and Religion in general was decried by the *noble Sporters* at *White's*, as a shameful Impediment put on the Pleasures of *Drury Lane*, and a rascally Restraint on human Liberty.

The Influence of this ~~Sun~~ of Exposition became so prevalent, that the paultry *Wits* made it the Subject of an Ale-house Disputation, and *Robin Hood's* was more constantly frequented than the Temple Church, St. Andrews Holborn, or even St. Paul's. Every weak Head was lead into Allegory, entered into the Commerce of *typifying*, and became distinguished for unfolding of Riddles, which before had scarce Capacity enough, to collect the Hour of the Day from an horizontal Sun-Dial.

I don't know any Thing that would have added greater Sanction to the symbolical Explanation of the Pot, than some few Quotations from Authors of Note and Credit. I wish *Walsingham* had recorded any Hint of a Pot, respecting *Chicheley's College*: It would have had great Weight, in Point of Antiquity, as it had not long ago (when quoted by the droll Defender of the Mallard,) in an Answer given to Mr. *Pointer* of *Slapton*. There we have a

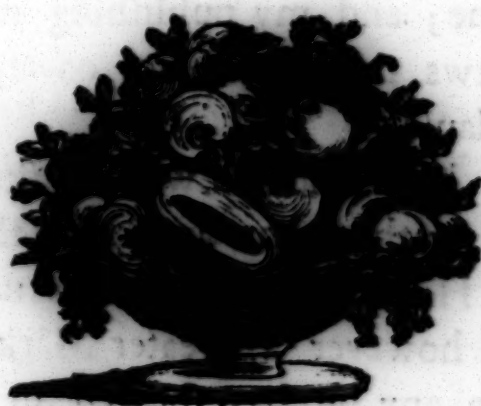
beautiful Blazoning of the Mallard, and a Drake proved not to be a Goose, as plain as *Elisba's* Pot is now proved to be the Similitude of a College.

made But to guard against all Encroachments which may be ~~and~~ from what has been just hinted at, I entirely agree with a late ingenious Author, in the Point of collateral Consanguinity, that no Descendant from the original *Mallard*, which was certainly of *Chicheley's* Household, and perhaps may be pleaded in the Kindred of him, can ever have (after such a Point of Time) any Right at all to a Fellowship in All-Souls College, notwithstanding he may be as big as a Goose, and (on one Side) bring a Pedigree from *Cadwallader* himself.

The *Oxford* symbolical Cookery seems, on the Whole, to have spoiled the Pottage, and if there be any Similitude between the Prophet and the Archbishop (which I do not deny) in taking Care of their respective Colleges, yet I must think, that the Author has shredded in his Gourds so plentifully, that the *Preacher* inadvertently supped in Death to his Character, by swallowing a Mefs of it before
Dinner,

Dinner, and before the *Meal* was applied to heal the noxious Ingredients.

As Ingenuity however must be allowed the Author's Talent, and such an Ingenuity as never before distinguished any of the noble Personages bred in All Souls College (whose Busts are preserved with great Decency in the College Library) a Statue of Brass, I hope, will be erected as a grateful Monument of the College Gratitude, and as a proper Metal to represent so singular an Author, who could symbolize a Pottage Pot into a College; and hear it preached without a Blush.



POSTSCRIPT.

POSTSCRIPT.

IF the foregoing Remarks should happen to displease the Author of the Sermon, and he should hope for a Paper War, by making any Reprisals, I must beg Leave to assure him that such an Attempt will be in vain: Works of greater Consequence engross the Attention of a *Reviewer*. And I think I have done his Sermon more Honour than is really its Due, in wasting a whole Day in writing some funny Remarks on it. The Bookseller's Profit, rather than any private Emolument, was one Reason for what I have done; and my publishing it *anonymous* plainly shews that I was not covetous of human Applause.

I think he would do well to skulk behind the Scenes, rather than appear on the Stage to stand the Hiss of a numerous Audience: It would be however a greater Mark of Judgment, than any he has shewed in the Composing his Discourse.

